

REMARKS

Overview

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-13 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ronen (5,745,556). Applicants hereby amend claims 6, 10 and 13 in order to clarify the subject matter of their invention and also hereby add claims 14-18. Thus, claims 1-18 are now pending.

Embodiments of the Present Invention

Embodiments of the present invention are directed to assisting with the placement of a telephone call by a user via a modem, such as a modem in a shared modem pool that is accessible over a network by users of that network. In some embodiments, techniques are used to bill the users for the telephone calls that they place, such as by identifying a user placing a call and providing information about that user to a third party (e.g., a local exchange carrier that receives calls placed through the modem pool) that provides billing-related functionality and/or information. Users may also be authenticated in some embodiments before they place such telephone calls.

The Ronen Reference

Ronen is directed to techniques for an ISP (Information Service Provider) to bill users for information and/or interactive services. In particular, a user calls a 900 telephone number that is associated with the ISP, the telephone company charges the user for the telephone call in the normal manner as for any telephone call with a toll charge, and the telephone company then provides payment to the ISP based on the charges to the user.

Ronen is unrelated to assisting a user in making a telephone call via a modem, and in particular is unrelated to multiple users placing calls over a network via a shared modem pool.

Analysis

The Examiner has rejected each of the previously pending claims 1-13 as being unpatentable over Ronen. However, each of the previously pending claims as rejected includes features and provides functionality not disclosed by Ronen, and are thus each allowable. For similar reasons, each of the newly added claims 14-18 is similarly allowable.

As one example of why the pending claims are allowable over Ronen, each of the claims recites a user of a network using a modem to place a telephone call. For example, newly added independent claim 15 recites "receiving a request from a user of the network to place a telephone call via a shared modem pool having multiple modems", "placing the telephone call via one of the modems of the shared modem pool", and "billing the user for the call based at least in part on the billing information associated with the user and on call charge information for the placed telephone call that is received from a public telephony network". Independent claim 1 as rejected similarly recites "receiving a request from a user of the network to place a telephone call through" a modem utilized by the network and using "billing information associated with the user . . . so that the user is billed for the call". Similarly, independent claim 10 as amended further recites receiving information for a network user that "has placed a telephone call via a shared modem pool" and then passing the telephone call through the network so that the user can be billed for the call, and independent claim 6 as amended recites language similar to claim 10.

As previously noted, however, Ronen is unrelated to users placing telephone calls via modems in any situation, let alone to users accessing network-accessible modems to place calls and to billing users for placing such calls. The Examiner has pointed to no teaching or suggestion in Ronen of such functionality, and thus Ronen cannot anticipate or render obvious the recited elements of the claims referenced above.

In addition, the pending dependent claims include the features of those claims from which they depend, and are thus allowable for the same reasons as those claims.

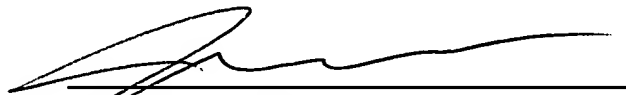
Moreover, the pending dependent claims also recite additional features lacking in the cited reference, and are thus allowable on the basis of those features as well.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the Applicant respectfully submits that all of the pending claims are allowable, and a Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 264-6380.

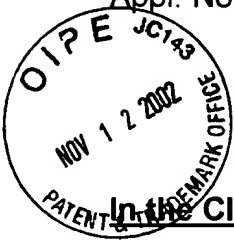
Respectfully submitted,
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APPENDIX

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Claims:

6. A method of processing a request to place a telephone call through a network ~~that utilizes a modem pool~~, comprising the steps of:

receiving user identifying information associated with a user that has placed a telephone call via a modem pool, the telephone call placed through the network;

searching a database containing information related to users of the network to correlate the user identifying information with the user and authenticate the user as a valid user of the network;

forwarding call charge information from a public telephony network so that the user is billed for the call; and

passing the telephone call through the network if the user identifying information has been correlated to the user and the user has been authenticated as a valid user of the network.

10. A network that utilizes a modem for processing calls made through the network, comprising:

a server for receiving user identifying information associated with a user of the network that has placed a telephone call ~~through the network;~~ via a shared modem pool;

a search module for searching a database containing information related to users of the network and for correlating the user identifying information with the user to authenticate the user as a valid user of the network such that when the user has been authenticated as a valid user of the network, the telephone call is passed through the network; and

a billing aggregator module, which aggregates charge call information received from a public telephony network and the user identifying information so that the user is billed for the call.

13. The ~~method~~network recited in claim 12, wherein the network comprises a wireless network.